



CHOGGIUNG LIMITED

VILLAGE CORPORATION

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October 28, 1999

Mr. Jeff Ottesen
Statewide Planning Chief
Alaska State Department of Transportation
And Public Facilities
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Subject: DOT/PF Southwest Alaska Regional Transportation Plan

Dear Mr. Ottesen:

I am writing at this time to express Choggiung's serious concern for the Department's Southwest Transportation Plan. I had an opportunity to see a presentation at the Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference (SWAMC) Annual Conference in Kodiak in September of this year. Based on that and follow-up with other organizations in the region, it has become clear to us that much more needs to be done relative to western Bristol Bay.

We're aware of the Department's intent to include public involvement in the process. I attended many of the presentations made by the consultants at the SWAMC conferences over the past two years. Early in the process, myself and others from the area were told that we were part of the Advisory Committee though we seldom received copies of draft documents or other written material. We had hoped to keep our respective communities involved in the process. Unfortunately, with little information coming from or about the process, we had little information to convey to our communities.

We also know how disruptive it can be to have people appear at the end of the process to complain about lack of involvement. Since the September meeting however, we've had a chance to communicate with other organizations in the Bristol Bay Region. It is evident that the boroughs on the east side of Bristol Bay, Lake and Penn and Bristol Bay, have been successful in assuring that their communities played a role in the planning and public processes. Unfortunately the west side of Bristol Bay has no umbrella-type organization to assure that our needs are voiced and included. It is evident as well that the consultants could not or did not take this into consideration. Few if any of the west Bristol Bay communities and organizations recall being contacted, in person or by mail, to introduce the project or to nominate future projects. We noted that interestingly enough, even projects known to DOT/PF are not included in the long-range plan, such as the Aleknagik Road Upgrade, a Manokotak to Dillingham road, the Clarks Point Airport and the Aleknagik Bridge Project to name a few.

For all intents and purposes, west Bristol Bay has been seriously overlooked in this long-term planning project. As a way of rectifying this over-sight, we would suggest the following actions.

1. Improved Participation Process. We suggest that direct contact be made with communities, regional entities and village councils in the communities in west Bristol Bay before this project is considered finished.
2. Revisit the Alternatives.
 - a. Include a phased approach to projects. As will probably be voiced by other entities, we want a set of realistic regional transportation projects. While some of the projects identified might be important, they are of a magnitude that almost guarantees that they will not happen. Acknowledging and describing achievable phases may be a much more feasible method for accomplishing them in the future.
 - b. Include roads, airports and ports that are in the vicinity of existing communities. It is extremely difficult to understand how such a solid line can be drawn relative to the boundaries surrounding communities when they are critical for inter-regional travel. For example, the Dillingham airport is the major link between the Nushagak and Togiak communities and the service center that Dillingham provides. As well, it is the link to commercial and freight services to Anchorage and further points.
 - c. Identify and include partnerships with other organizations. BIA, PHS, VSW and others are building roads in the region. More emphasis is needed on coordinating these efforts with state projects and plans.

As with other organizations, we are more than willing to help to accomplish the added steps to the process. We look forward to working with you to develop a plan that works for west Bristol Bay.

Sincerely,



Alice Ruby
Director of Operations

/ar
cc:

Governor Tony Knowles
Representative Carl Moses
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Representative Mary Capsner
Chris Hladick, City of Dillingham
Ms. Ida Roehl, Curyung Tribal Council
City of Togiak
Togiak Village Council
City of Aleknagik
Aleknagik Village Council
City of Clarks Point
Clarks Point Village council
Koliganek Village Council
City of New Stuyahok
New Stuyahok Village Council
City of Ekwok
Ekwok Village Council
Portage Creek Village Council
Twin Hills Village Council

Ekuk Village Council
City of Iñanokotak
Manokotak Village Council
Walt Wrede, Lake and Peninsula Borough
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Mark Ernest, SWAMC
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